



Egypt Woods

A Hike into Beverly's History

By Nancy Coffey

Some warm winter day or early in the spring, before the trees leaf out, hike Woods Egypt, one of Beverly's open space jewels.

Drive down Greenwood Avenue from Hart Street in Beverly Farms, park on Stone Ridge Road near the closed gate, and take a beautiful hike into the past. Walk down the dirt section of Greenwood, pass a second gate, and take an immediate left onto the Greenbelt path. In the course of an hour, you will walk through serene woods that include the site of an early 20th century immigrant settlement, a rocky outcropping with an ocean view, and the



carriage road of a great estate. You'll wander through hemlock and pine woods among granite cliffs and erratic

boulders, mosses, ferns and partridgeberries. The entire area is often alive with birds.

As early as 1780, this area was known as Woods Egypt, perhaps because of its many hilly, granite outcroppings. Too steep and rocky for farming, most of this area was used as wood lots, first by local farmers, later by seaside estate owners.

The path begins on land that once belonged to Connolly Brothers, the Beverly Farms contractors who laid out the roads and lanes and built the stonework of the great Gold Coast estates. As you walk into the quiet, imagine this place a hundred years ago when Connolly employees were blasting away granite cliffs and loading the broken stone into horse drawn tip carts. Look at the exquisite stonework of the small house foundation and

well hole. In 1910, Connolly's Italian foreman, James Zampell, lived here with his wife Rose and their five children. In addition to working for Connolly, Zampell operated a small grocery store in the house. Rose cooked meals for the seven single Italian men who "boarded" with them or in the barn.

As you follow the path through a field of blackberry and sumac, imagine a shantytown of tarpaper shacks in the nearby woods. Forty or more young Italian men lived here year round, saving money to buy land in Italy or to bring their families here. They were Connolly day laborers, earning the going rate of \$1.50-\$1.75 for a ten hour day.

Turn right at the fork in path, skirt the blasted out granite to your left and right, and continue up the hill into the woods. Follow the markers to the top of the hill where two granite knobs offer views of the ocean. From the higher knob, you can see to your left the old Martello tower on Smith's point, House Island off West Beach, and the roof of the old Beveridge Estate on Everett Street. Far to your right through the trees you may see the white cross on St. Margaret's steeple as well as bits of buildings and ocean beyond.

When you have seen enough, follow the path to the left until you meet up with the old



carriage road. Walk a little way down the road on your left to view the great stone-bearing wall on the right hand side where the road was built next to a fern filled ravine. Then turn back and continue down the road past a great granite cliff covered in mosses. This carriage road, now part of AMG property, once connected several great estates. Continue down the road, noticing large erratic boulders dropped by melting glaciers in the woods to your right. In winter look for the bright red partridgeberries and their delicate green vines.

At the bottom of the hill, turn right onto the dirt road, Greenwood Avenue, and continue, keeping right, until you return to your car. Save other trails in these woods for the spring when wild flowers will be in bloom or the fall when you can find many colored mushrooms and eerie pale Indian pipes.

Photography by David Brewster